Up Memory Lane Or The Lisdonwilly Road

As the car slowed down, the driver’s side window opened. Feeling a sudden low quick panic rising in my chest fading away quickly, Knowing it was a friendly encounter.

Not being quite dusk, his face seemed friendly as we exchanged helloes. “Nice Evening”, I remarked. “indeed it is”, was his soft reply.

Having gone for a short walk out of the edge of the city, it was easy to reach the countryside. The loose plan was to go up the short side road towards the waterworks. There you can climb up a trodden

embankment to view the vast country fields and spires of the Armagh Cathedral.

Very few people walked this way. Only the farmers retrieving their lost sheep who scrunched the grass into an informal path. All uphill.

Today two cars however sat unmanned off the wee road. Passing them curiously, I spied two grown men running, stopping, stretching, throwing from their shoulder, a small hard stone like a bullet down the tarmac.

“Ah” road bowls practice. That is what it is. Was my decision to walk away on past. The footpath was now covered in grass, weeds and rotting Brambley crab apples

as it came to an end. Stepping on further I remembered the lane that went upwards, in not too steep steps ending on a plateau that allowed the view over the seven hills of Armagh. Like the song that begins:

Built on Seven Hills

My heart forever thrills

Each time I hear it mentioned anywhere

It’s name for me shall be a constant

Memory

Of childhood days in that old city fair

As we chatted on and bluntly asked each other who we were.

Where we hailed from. The conversation flowed.

Reminiscing on youthful days, Kevin disclosed he was always from Armagh. He knew my husband Michael well. They met up as a group of ‘Golden Oldies’, his description to play golf on Wednesdays at the club.

“Not much golf anymore”. “The knees can’t stand it”. “ But the getting together is good”. “The craic is mighty”, he added.

On my behalf we talked about Keady seven miles away.

“We walked it some times and home again.” “I was good at the roller skating.”

“You had a cinema too and a picture house”, he added.

“Armagh had closed down all social gatherings then.”

Indeed it had. ‘The Troubles’ were rife in the city then. That ‘murder mile’ Keady was yet untouched.

“The penny then dropped”, Kevin almost shouted, “you were that girl then, we were all in awe of you”. “Some of us in love”.

Indeed it was me. With my white roller boots, showing them all how to skate. To dance on wheels around the floor.

And the display of ‘roller dancing’. Leaping, turning and rolling between outstretched legs. To the music by our practiced group of friends.

We roller skated all over the countryside. Derrynoose, Dungannon, Middletown and Monaghan. These were the days.

When I reach high into the top of my wardrobe now, I have to push those tired white leather roller boots aside.

I reminisce too on those happy times when we were free. That stroll up memory lane. The Lisdonwilly Road.